

REPORT OF THE
Delegates sent to Ottawa Literary Convention.

24TH OCTOBER, 1877.

The undersigned, in conformity with the request of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, attended the celebration held in the City of Ottawa, on the 24th, to inaugurate by speeches, music and a dramatic *soirée* the opening of the new Institute of Ottawa; the next day they took part in the proceedings held there by the Literary Convention organised under the auspices of the *Institut Canadien* of that city, with the object of devising practical means: 1st. For the promotion of Canadian literature; 2nd. For the preservation and publication of Canadian archives; 3rd. For improvements in the Law regulating Copy Rights.

The inauguration of the new *Institut* was attended with much success and great *éclat*, and was honored by the presence of their Excellencies, Lord and Lady Dufferin and suite, Cabinet Ministers, and a brilliant array of the literary talent of the Dominion capital, together with some twenty or thirty delegates from the sister societies of Quebec, Montreal, St. Hyacinthe, &c.

The orator of the evening was the Hon. P. J. O. Chauveau, one of our former Presidents, who in an eloquent discourse paid a well-merited compliment to the intellectual tastes, enterprise and munificence of the citizens of Ottawa here assembled to witness the opening of a seat of literary advancement, as evinced in this noble structure, in which they then for the first time stood, at a cost of some \$20,000.

The Literary Convention was opened the next day at 10 A.M., the sitting being taken up by well timed addresses from Professor H. Larue, Mr. P. LeMay, Mr. Chauveau and others, varied by familiar remarks from the members as to the most effective means, on behalf of the state and individuals, to foster a national literature; the resolutions adopted are herewith enclosed.

This sitting closed at 12, noon, when the delegates, in a body, waited on His Excellency, at Rideau Hall, by special invitation. His Excellency was full of courtesy and evinced deep interest in the object for which the Convention had assembled.

It may be satisfactory to the Literary and Historical Society to know that its delegates were the recipients of marked civility from His Excellency and Lady Dufferin the next day also. *

The afternoon sitting of the Convention was specially devoted to the important question of the Canadian archives: one of our laborious members, Mr. L. P. Turcotte, read an ably written paper, pointing out the localities where the archives of the Dominion now lie scattered, and in some cases rapidly decaying through dampness, vermin and other causes. Mr. Turcotte dwelt on the necessity of collecting in each Province the various manuscripts and printed matter referring to it, and placing the same in the custody of the Government. His address led to an earnest debate, from which it appeared manifest that the whole question of our archives was immersed in neglect and chaos. Instead of a Public Record Office, such as we find in the Mother country, we have no less than four *Bureaux* in Ottawa containing most important archives. The dele-

* Having been honored by His Excellency to breakfast with him *en famille* at Rideau Hall, together with two other Delegates, Hon. P. J. O. Chauveau and B. Sulte, Esq.

gates failed to ascertain the extent of the archives in each office—the staff of officers charged with the cataloguing, classifying and copying of the same: the work they had performed. It was stated that two gentlemen had been sent to England to examine the papers relating to Canadian affairs in the British Museum, the Public Record Office and other places; some hundred of volumes of M. S., such as the Haldimand and Dorchester Papers, were noticed; some examined, and two reports published by the House of Commons, Ottawa, on this subject, one in 1873, the other in 1874, (which reports are now submitted.) The gentlemen sent to England were: the Rev. abbé Vereault, advantageously known for his historical notes, and Mr. Bremner, a clerk of the Department of Agriculture, Ottawa. It was stated in the course of the debate by Dr. Miles, the Historian of Canada, and representing the Education *Bureau* of the Province of Quebec, that the delegates to England unwittingly went over the same ground twice, and that the public would be satisfied with nothing short of a thorough examination of the Canadian archives now deposited in London, in the British Museum, the *Public Record Office* and in the War Office, with a view first to having prepared a full catalogue of contents for publication. A gentleman, quite an authority on an important branch of archives—the Church Registers—the abbé C. Tanguay, favored the Convention with a very elaborate address on this subject. In verity, there are few departments in our public records, of more daily interest to citizens of every denomination in the Dominion. The Church Registers in our Courts of Justice make or unmake fortunes every day, by settling questions of inheritance, bequests, let alone the invaluable light they throw on questions of race and population. Several laws have been passed with the object of providing means to secure Church Registers of marriages, births and deaths—against accidents by fire.

Still, the undersigned are credibly informed that lacunæ exist in some Church Registers, which might lead to most disastrous results for families: the law requires two copies to be made, one to be kept by the parochial authority, the other, in the office of the Clerk of the Superior Court: it is stated that a wide lacuna exists in the Registers of one of the leading Episcopalian Churches of this Province, so that even should the Clerk of the Court in this case possess a complete Register, the status and welfare of thousand of families depend on the safe custody of this copy, and a bitter experience has very recently taught us that Court House Records,* no more than others, enjoy immunity against the fire-fiend.

Rev. Mr. Tanguay's address was clear, concise and practical in its bearing.

During the limited time at their disposal, the undersigned must regret it was impossible to probe to its last recesses the very important question of the archives.

They again urge on the Society the propriety of renewing the representations submitted to Government in 1871, with a view of having a comprehensive legislative measure framed—one to include in its scope all the Provinces of the Dominion.

A resolution was prepared by one of our associate members, Mr. L. P. Turcotte, and Mr. LeMoine was asked to second it. Whilst Mr. LeMoine would have preferred a measure more general than that embodied in Mr. Turcotte's resolution, he readily seconded it, as it affirmed a principle good in itself, but rather limited.

When it is borne in mind, how the priceless Records of our past history lie scattered, some eaten by rust or rats,

* In 1872, the Court House of the District of Quebec, with the greater portion of its records, were consumed by fire.

others mouldering in subterranean vaults, others pitched helter skelter in dark, dusky cupboards in the different cities of Canada, unaccessible to the historian except at considerable expense, the undersigned think that it is high time to press for a State Record Office, under an able and responsible head.

The third subject brought under the notice of the Convention, was some minor changes in our Copy right act, praying that the period of copy right should be extended from 28 years with privilege of 14 additional years, on re-registering—to a longer period, for the benefit of the widow and heirs—there being a desire to assimilate an act to that of Britain.

In concluding, the undersigned cannot sufficiently testify to the delicate and constant attentions shown them as representing the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, and also to the generous and profuse hospitality extended to them on behalf of the members of the *Institut Canadien* of Ottawa: a debt of gratitude in this instance has been contracted by the guests towards the *Institut Canadien*; let us hope, in time, it may be acquitted.

The undersigned have also joined with the 'delegates of the *Institut Canadien* of Quebec, in taking measures to have the principal addresses delivered at the Convention republished in the *Morning Chronicle* of this city, of the 1st and 2nd November instant.

The whole respectfully submitted.

Quebec, 7th Nov., 1877.

J. M. LEMOINE,

THS. BLAND STRANGE, Lt.-Col. R.A.,

Delegates of the Lit. & Hist. Society.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE OTTAWA LITERARY CONVENTION.

—At the Literary Convention the following resolutions were adopted:—That this Literary Convention is of opinion that the following means would contribute most materially to the extension of education and to the development of Canadian literature :

1st. The establishment of parochial libraries in the localities where they do not exist now, and the establishment of public libraries under the auspices of the municipalities in the different cities and towns of the country.

2nd. The establishment of literary institutions and debating clubs in all the localities where they do not exist now, and which are important enough to maintain them.

3rd. The establishment of a system for a regular course of public lectures in our large cities on the plan inaugurated by the Laval University.

4th. The distribution to our authors of prizes offered to competition by the State, by our most important educational institutions at a fixed period.

5th. The distribution as prizes in our schools of a much larger number of Canadian books of recognized merit, sanctioned by the Board of Public Instruction.

6th. The establishment of a Canadian Book store by a joint stock company with branches in our various cities, in order to promote specially the sale of Canadian books.

Moved by Mr. L. P. Turcotte, and seconded by Mr. M. LeMoine, that a request be made to the Federal Government, and to the Local Government of Quebec, asking them :

1st. To have copies made, by competent persons, of the historical documents deposited in the archives of London, Paris and other cities.

2nd. To deposit the archives of the Province of Quebec in one spot, which should be at the office of the registrar, as containing already the largest portion of the French archives.

3rd. To place together in another depot at Ottawa, the archives disseminated in the various Federal departments ; this depot being placed under the control of the Department of Agriculture.

Moved by Mr. Ernest Gagnon, and seconded by Lieut.-Colonel Strange, that a petition be prepared for presentation to the Dominion Government, requesting that the Copyright Law be so changed as to harmonize with that of Great Britain, allowing it to extend during the life of the author and fifty years later.

